# What is a novel?

The term “novel” can be described in many ways. The following list contains only a few of the possible descriptions.

A novel:

* Is much longer than a fictional short story.
* Tells about people to whom things happen.
* Develops themes by selecting organized details and events.
* Is too long to be read in a single sitting.

Compared to a short story, a novel has main characters that are more fully developed. A novel often develops several plots of equal importance, or one main plot and numerous subplots. Two separate plots may seem to proceed independently, moving close to each other as the novel progresses until they become entangled halfway through or near the end.

A novel may have any number of climaxes, each perhaps a little more intense than the one preceding, so that the effect is of being swept over ever-higher foothills to the highest peaks at the end.

The setting of a novel is likely to jump from one place to another.

There may be sudden shifts from one period of time to another. The action may jump back to an earlier date (flashbacks – which may explain later actions that otherwise could not be understood). When several plots are being pursued, the author may ask us to follow one plot through a certain period of time, then return to pick up a second plot and carry it through the same time period.

In a novel, the point of view from which the story is told is likely to shift from person to person.

The length of a novel makes it likely that several themes will be illustrated in the course of the action.

# Five hints which may be useful in reading a novel:

1. *Withhold your judgment until you are fairly well into the novel*. Allow the author a generous number of pages in which to capture your interest. Don’t decide too early that you dislike what you are reading. The first few pages will seldom have the clarity and impact of a short story. Read attentively, with an open mind. Refrain from insisting that the author write just the novel you want to read; instead, undertake to appreciate the novel as it is written.
2. *As early as possible, place yourself in the world of the novel*. Read the opening chapters of a novel with particular care. Use whatever help the author gives you to picture the setting in which the action will occur. Your mind should be precisely picturing – and enjoying – the looks of the place. As soon as possible, you should visualize a novel’s characters. Look closely at the people, and watch what they do. Be sure to distinguish between the major and minor characters as soon as you can.
3. *Read with one eye on the novel as a whole*. You should not let yourself flounder in details: you should not struggle and grow discouraged with puzzles or confusions that will be made in one relatively minor incident so that you lose sight of the overall shape and pattern. Reading with care early in a novel does not mean bogging down in it.
4. *Resume reading before the point where you set the novel down*. The length of a novel means that, in reading, you will have to learn how to handle interruptions. The easiest way to recapture the plot and atmosphere where you left off is to take up the book again a page or two before the point of interruption. That much repetition provides the fastest way to refresh your mind about details of the action and also to re-establish the mood the author had achieved just before you set the book down.
5. *At the end, look back over the novel as a whole.* Because most novels must be read piecemeal, you are likely to finish the book with the last section so clear in your mind as to obscure much of what came before. It is a good idea, at the moment you finish the final chapter and while the mood of the book is still fresh, to glance back through the novel as a whole. Start at the beginning and leaf through the pages. Suddenly the structure of the novel will leap out at you. Characters will assume their proper proportions. Incidents will fall into a pattern. Statements will reveal new significance. The brief time spent in seeing the story as a whole will do more than anything else to make it a lasting part of your experience.

# Journal Entry Focus Possibilities…

1. Which character(s) is (was) your favorite?
2. Which characters(s) do (did) you dislike?
3. Are you like anyone in this work? Explain.
4. Does anyone in this work remind you of anyone you know? Explain.
5. If you could be anyone in this work, who would it be? Explain.
6. What quality(ies) of which character strikes you as a good characteristic to develop within yourself over the years? Why? How does the character demonstrate this quality?
7. Overall, what kind of feeling did you have after reading a few paragraphs of this work? Midway? After finishing the work?
8. Do any incidents, ideas, or actions in this work remind you of your own life or something that happened to you? Explain.
9. Do you like this piece of work? Why or why not?
10. Are there any parts of this work that were confusing to you? Which parts? Why do you think you got confused?
11. Do you feel there is an opinion expressed by the author in this work? What is it? How do you know this? Do you agree? Why or why not?
12. Do you think the title of this work is appropriate? Is it significant? Explain. What do you think the title means?
13. Would you change the ending of this story in any way? Why? Tell your ending…
14. What kind of a person do you think this author is? What makes you feel this way?
15. How does this work make you feel? Explain.
16. Do you share any of the feelings of the characters in this work? Explain.
17. Sometimes works leave you with the feeling that there is no more to tell. Did this work do this? What do you think might happen?
18. Would you like to read something else by this author? Explain.
19. What do you feel is the most important word, phrase, passage, or image in this book? Explain why it is important.
20. If you were an English teacher, would you want to share this work with your students? Why or why not?

# Ontological Questions

Definition of ontology

1:  a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature and relations of being Ontologydeals with abstract entities.

2:  a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of things that have existence

**Keep these in mind when making connections to the novels we read this year.**

What does it mean to be an adult human being?

What does it mean to be a good person?

How should people treat one another?

Why am I on this earth?

Do I have free will or am I controlled by fate?

Does truth change?

What is love?

Is a person inherently good? Bad? Both?

How much freedom should an individual have?

Is a person basically alone or are they an integral member of society?

Why does suffering exist?

Is there a God?

What happens when I die?

Is there such a thing as a devil? Evil? Satan?

How important is money?